



Consultation Hold: Interruptions During General Practice Consultations

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Introduction

✓ Ireland:

- Interruptions in 53 of 212 consultations (25%)
 - 80 interruptions
 - 40% significant interruptions
 - Phone

✓ Spain:

- Interruptions in 91% and 54% consultations
 - Mean duration: 35 and 16 seconds
 - Door



Objectives

- To characterize the interruptions in consultations of the researchers' Health Unit.
- Basis for an evaluative cycle of quality.



Methods

- Descriptive cross-sectional study
- Consultations of 5 Family Physicians
- Authorization granted by Ethics Committee of the Regional Health Administration.



Methods

- 2 weeks of evaluation (28 October to 8 November/2013)
- Randomization of General and Family Medicine consultations periods with at least 2 hours
 - Inclusion of 2 periods for each doctor (morning/afternoon)
- Participant observational method



Methods

First Step

Informed consent was signed by patients



Observation

Only one researcher physician



Record

Specifically designed data sheet



Methods

- **Interruption:** Any event that interferes with the predictable process of consultation, from the patient call to his exit. The researcher's presence was considered a predictable process in the consultation.
- **Significant interruption:** One lasting more than 5 seconds and/or which resulted in a significant disruption of the flow of the consultation.
- **Justified interruption:** Unavoidable when it occurs.



Methods

- **Inside factor:** interruption source has origin in the context of the consultation: cell phone, lack of material, electronic problem, exit from office.
- **Outside factor:** interruption source has origin outside the context of the consultation: door, consulting room telephone.



Results

- **Sample:** 63 consultations
 - Mean duration: 18.5 minutes [4-40 minutos]
- 37 consultations (**58.7%**) had at least one interruption
 - 91.9% (n=34) had significant interruption
 - 83.3% (n=30) had unjustified interruption

Number interruptions	1	2	3	4	5
Number consultations	19 (51,4%)	10 (27%)	6 (16,2)	1 (2,7%)	1 (2,7%)



Results

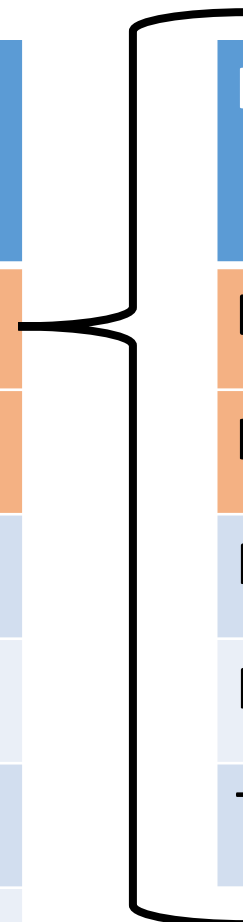
- **66** interruptions in total
 - Mean duration: 42 seconds
 - 86,4% (n=57) were significant
 - 82% (n=50) were unjustified



Results

Interruption source	n (%)	% significant
Door	29 (43,9%)	93%
Cell phone	12 (18,2%)	50%
Lack of material	8 (12,1%)	88%
Consulting room telephone	7 (10,6%)	100%
Electronic problem	5 (7,6%)	100%
Exit from office	5 (7,6%)	100%
TOTAL	66 (100%)	

Interruption agent	n
Doctor	7
Intern	6
Patient	6
Nurse	5
Technical assistant	5





Results

	Interruption		P
	Significant	Non significant	
Outside factors	34 (94.4%)	2 (5.6%)	0,041
Inside factors	23 (76.7%)	7 (23.4%)	
TOTAL	57	9	



Discussion

- In this study at least half of the consultations had an interruption.
- The door stands out as the main source and had a high impact in consultations.
- This results are similar to a Spanish study.



Discussion

- Interruptions by an intern may represent peculiarities of the formation and can be important in this process.
- Inside factors, mainly the cell phone, are related to the relationship doctor/patient and revealed to have a lesser impact.
- Corrective measures may improve clinical practice.



Discussion

- **Methodological limitations:**

- Observer Bias (one observer)
- Behavior Bias (perception of the observer presence)



Conclusion

- **Objective:** To characterize the interruptions in consultations of the researchers' Health Unit.
- Interruptions were frequent (**58.7%**), significant (**86.4%**) and unjustified (**82%**).
- The main source of interruptions was the door.
- Outside factors had greater impact on consultations.